

**November 2020**

# **A Pandemic Devotional**

# **Bethany Lutheran Church**



*Bethany Lutheran Church  
2900 Parkview Drive  
Longview, WA 98632*

*November 2020 Devotional*

*God's Blessings to ...*

During this difficult time of physical separation, God calls us together through the power of the Holy Spirit. We invite you during this time to join together each day with our Bethany family through this daily devotional.

Your Bethany family continues to hold you in prayer, and we look forward to being physically together again.

If you enjoy this devotional and would like this to continue for December,  
please let Pastor Megan know!

Lectionary texts and some quotes taken from Sundays And Seasons  
(Augsburg Fortress)

## A message from Pastor Megan:

Throughout this time at home, many of are experiencing “Zoom-out”, and as we begin to become accustomed to our new routines, making time for scripture, prayer, and connection becomes more difficult. We invite you during this time to use this daily devotional as little or as much as you like. Our devotional this month has a special focus on stewardship and our stewardship season theme “Building From Our Cornerstone” as well.

Each day follows a similar format:

**Scripture**—Spending time in God’s Word each day

**Story**—Meditate over the stories, questions, and applications

**Prayer**—Pray together with your Bethany family, connected through time and space with words and Spirit.

**Connect**—Make some time to connect with others, discuss the day’s devotions, touch base, help others to remember that we are in this together.

**Monday November 30th, 2020**

**Scripture**—Psalm 85:8-13

**Story**—How might we listen better to what God is saying to us these days? Even for me, this is often a struggle.

I’m currently reading Glennon Doyle’s “Untamed” and in it she shares that in the midst of troubling and difficult times in her life, when she felt most disconnected from herself and from God, she set aside 10 minutes a day to sit in her closet in silence.

For weeks that 10 minutes was mostly her silently creating grocery lists in her mind—but eventually, she began to “sink down” into her body, to open herself up to what God might be calling for her.

I wish I had enough discipline to do this. I might try.

But even if we don’t want to sit in silence for 10 minutes, what if we made time, even a minute or two each day, to quiet ourselves, to sit and pray, and to listen for God.

So that we can remember that steadfast love and faithfulness God continues to pour out over us, so that we can see how God might be calling us to support and participate in righteousness and peace meeting together.

We’re in a new church year, a new season moving towards winter, what faithfulness might spring up around us if we take some moments to listen?

**Prayer**—Lord, help us to listen to you. Speak your peace and faithfulness into our hearts and lead us back to you. Strengthen us to be your servants of steadfast love, faithfulness, peace and righteousness in our communities and in our world. In the name of your Son Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

**Connect**—So maybe you can’t do it every day, but if you can, take 10 minutes to connect with yourself and God in silence today.

## Sunday November 29th, 2020

**Scripture**—Mark 13:24-37

**Story**—It's the first Sunday of Advent!!!! I'm really hoping I finally got up the energy to redye my hair. Hopefully if you see me online today it is with that beautiful royal blue that I so so love!

I am always excited for Advent to begin, for lots of reason (preparing for Jesus, the music, the decorations), but a big part of that is also because the time after Pentecost is SO long and I get so tired of green.

And honestly this year, this time after Pentecost has seemed to last decades. And as often with our first Sunday of Advent, we are welcomed with some super not Christmas-y apocalyptic scripture. Cool.

For this Sunday, let's take in Jesus's words that are meant to open our eyes to hope and light and peace in the world. And just leave it at that today. What we're needing right now is a little bit less apocalypse and a little more joy.

And also maybe a nap.

**Prayer**—Lord, you ring in this season with eye opening revelations, with difficult words. Forgive us these moments of joy and excitement, and continue to call us into your mission for the world. In the name of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen!

**Connect**—It's Advent – and this year I am not waiting for Christmas carols until Christmas. Take some time to turn on some Christmas music today and sing and enjoy!

## Sunday November 1st, 2020

**Scripture**—Luke 20:17

**Story**— Today is All Saints Sunday, a day we remember all those who came before us. For the last few years, this day has been particularly hard for me.

All Saints, watching the video play with our church's loved ones, has always been sacred and holy for me. It often included dear ones that I have known, that I have helped to bury. And now it includes members of my own family.

This year for the background music of our video, I chose "Soon and Very Soon", the song I sang with my grandpa in his last days, the song I sing in my heart when I grieve for all those we've lost.

Because in that song is the promise—even death is not the end of our stories, through Jesus, our king, our shepherd, our life and resurrection. I hope today in the midst of remembrance, you too can celebrate this promise.

**Prayer**— God, on this holy Sunday, as we mourn, as we remember, and as we look to your promises, be with us in this day, shine your light of love and hope and life upon us. In the name of your Risen Son, Jesus , we pray, amen.

**Connect**— For today, connect with those you've lost, spend time with photos, remembering stories, and giving thanks for the lives you've shared.

Monday, November 2nd, 2020

**Scripture**—Psalm 70

**Story**— Throughout these last 7 months, I have found my own conviction in words like this Psalm. Not that I am poor and needy, but because so many in our community and in our country are. Marginalized groups are crying to us that their lives are at stake, and maybe we agree, but during this time, my own personal work that I invite you into as well is to begin to listen for how God might use you too in this deliverance for those in need.

**Prayer**— God, make me an instrument of your peace, guide me to participate in your deliverance for the poor and needy, help me to be a true ally with those who experience undue suffering in our community and world. Let all who rejoice in you, God, who are glad in you, share your salvation and greatness with all who ache to hear it. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to listen to God today, how might God be guiding you in this time of seeking justice? Are you interested in books to read? Looking to find ways you can support those in our community? For lists and suggestions feel free to reach out to me, as I am on this journey of learning and acting too.

Friday November 27th, 2020 & Saturday November 28th, 2020

For this holiday weekend, I wanted to include these two scripture texts together as we prepare for Advent and the Christmas season to begin

**Scripture**— 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 & Deuteronomy 8:7-18

**Story**—Paul reminds the church in Corinth (and us) that as a response to our thankfulness we are called into generosity.

This is your pastoral gentle reminder that generosity is not quite the same as consumerism. Today is Black Friday, a day filled with buying, selling, and some pretty ungenerous behavior in stores and even online.

If this is your post-Thanksgiving tradition—don't worry, I'll probably put a few orders in online for Christmas gifts as well. But this is also an invitation to think about how we spend our money, where we spend our money, and who needs our generosity today.

**Prayer**—Lord we give you thanks that you supply our needs, continue do so Lord so that we can not only celebrate your gifts, but share them with our loved ones and our neighbors we do not know. Amen.

**Connect**—Take some time today to connect with your gift-giving. Is there a small portion of your spending that you could give to those in need through organizations in our community and world? Even a single dollar can go a long way to helping others today.

## Thursday November 26th, 2020

**Scripture**— Psalm 65

**Story/Connect**—I gave a lot of space on this page for Thanksgiving, because honestly I want you to use some of this space to write down and connect with your own thanksgiving in your life.

Thanksgiving is often a complicated holiday, particularly for our native neighbors who see a celebration of something peaceful that may in fact be false.

And so together on this day, we lament the acts and violence against native peoples in this land, and we give thanks for new understandings, for the gifts God brings us, and for our families on this day.

Take some time to pray, to give thanks, and to write out here in this space who and what you are thankful for as well as how you might work to share God's deliverance in the world:

**Prayer**—In the words of Anne Lamott, "Thank you, thank you, thank you, amen."

## Tuesday November 3rd, 2020

**Scripture**—Amos 5:18-24

**Story**— As we move into the end of the church year this month, we begin to read more and more in our scriptures the prophetic words calling for God's justice and righteousness. Amos 5:24 is famously used in MLK's "I have a dream speech". As I talked about yesterday, I'm in my own personal journey of dreaming, learning, and praying over God's justice and righteousness. And on an election day, in the midst of this chaotic and divisive year, I am grateful for hope in dreaming and prayer today.

**Prayer**—Lord, guide us to dream of your justice and righteousness in the world. Strengthen us in uncertain times to seek your dream, your hope, and your life today. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

**Connect**— One of the best ways we can make our own voices heard in our communities, especially today—make sure you've voted. Whatever or whoever you vote for, connect with our community and our country today by making your voice heard. And if that's already done, just take some time to breathe and pray and listen for God today, in the year 2020, you deserve 10 minutes for just you and God today.

## Wednesday November 4th, 2020

**Scripture**—Psalm 78:1-7

**Story**—Since becoming a parent, I find many of my prayers and motivations have something to do with my child. I've heard this is also true for aunts and uncles, godparents, teachers, etc. However children come into our lives, they impact us and our hopes for their future.

Hadley told me last week that she would like to be a goat doctor when she grows up. She wants to care for God's creation—just in particular goats. Her hopes and plans for the future bring me hope and joy and inspire me too.

**Prayer**— God, help us to hear your teaching, guide us to share your deeds and powers with the young ones in our lives, and continue to give us your hope and joy, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with a younger person in your life today. Share in their joys and experience the hope we can find in rejoicing and imagining together.

## Thursday November 5th, 2020

**Scripture**—1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Story**— Where are you finding hope today? When you find yourself in grief and mourning, how do God's promises of life bring you hope?

**Prayer**—God, gather us together with all your children, sharing your life and love together, amen.

**Connect**— Reach out to someone you know who may be experiencing grief and mourning today. Listen to them, support them, and offer hope (as appropriate), they need you today.

## Monday November 23rd, 2020

**Scripture**—Psalm 80:1-7

**Story**—As we move into this week of thanks-giving and looking towards the first Sunday of Advent, I love this Psalm as a prayer together with the psalmist for God's restorative light for each and every one of us.

**Prayer**—Restore us, O God, let your face shine upon and we shall be saved. Amen.

**Connect**—Looking ahead at this week, you may be a bit extra busy with figuring out Thanksgiving during a pandemic. Maybe you're grieving for plans cancelled or postponed. Take some time today to connect with God, to breathe, to meditate in God's light today.

## Tuesday November 24th, 2020

**Scripture**—Isaiah 64:1-9

**Story**—"This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past."

**Prayer**—God we cry out to you for normalcy, lamenting in this time, deliver us, comfort us, and guide us in all that we do this week, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Connect**—"We are all your people" who are some people you can connect with today? Give them a call!

## Wednesday November 25th, 2020

**Scripture**—1 Corinthians 1:3-9

**Story**—Thanksgiving isn't until tomorrow, but let's take some time to give thanks today!

**Prayer**—Lord, strengthen us so that we might share your gifts with others today and all days. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord we pray, amen.

**Connect**—Who would you like to give thanks to God for? If you can, take some time to let them know today!

## Sunday November 22nd, 2020

**Scripture**— Matthew 25:31-46

**Story**— So one, can I tell you how absolutely excited I am to preach on this text now that I have GOATS?!? I mean I've always preferred goats to sheep, but now I have the experience of both sides! I think my sermon for this Sunday will talk a little bit about that too. Probably.

But today as I prepare our devotional, we're a little over a week from the national election, and with all the news and chaos and unending rhetoric...it is such a breath of fresh air to read about the kind of ruler, the kind of leader, the kind of king Christ is. And so for this Sunday morning, I just want to meditate, to bask in the glory that is our God in flesh who comes to the earth not to conquer or to rule, but to love and care for the least of these. Calling us to love and care for one another. For the hungry and thirsty, the stranger and the imprisoned, for the naked and for the sick, for our neighbors who are so often ignored, painted as the enemy....for our neighbors who are in need.

Jesus calls us to provide for those who do not have food or water or clothing. Jesus calls us to connect with the sick and the imprisoned. Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger who we might otherwise fear. Because when we do these things, we do them out of our love for Christ, a love that we have been given, a love that must be shared.

And it's not easy. I think most of us are goats in this simile that Jesus presents. We fail a lot, we fall into divisive traps that make us see our neighbor as somehow so "other" than us. We find ourselves uncomfortable or unsure of how to begin. We hear that Jesus is asking us to take risks we don't want to take. But Jesus keeps calling us into this Kin-dom, and Jesus dies and rises from the dead to forgive us our failures so that tomorrow we can try again.

**Prayer**—God you make us both sheep and goat, both wanting to follow your will but wanting to follow our own or the will of others. In the name of our king, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Connect**—It's Sunday! Take some time to call your church family today!

## Friday November 6th, 2020

**Scripture**— Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

**Story**—"Choose this day whom you will serve." Joshua has big demands of the Israelite people, and as we read their story, God asks us too. Our idols may be different than the Israelites, but we have them too.

My confession, the idol I too often put my trust in is in perfectionism. This idea that I could do everything just right and get everything done and be seen in the eyes of others as being worthy and good because of my organization, my attention to detail, etc. etc.

But the truth is—my false idol is of course, false. Only Christ is perfect, and although we try to emulate him, we cannot be him. In doing so we only harm ourselves.

**Prayer**— Lord, you led the ancestors of our faith out of Egypt, out of slavery, you performed great signs in their sight. Help us to choose you, to turn to you, and to serve you in all things, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with yourself today: what idols do you put your trust in? How have they served you? How can turning to God instead change your experience? What can you do to serve God today?

## Saturday November 7th, 2020

**Scripture**— Romans 15:13

**Story**—Our lectionary during this month leans heavily on the prophetic, sometimes it's important to take a break and look towards this prayer from Paul.

**Prayer**— God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in you, so that we may overflow with hope, amen!

**Connect**—Connect with joy and peace today. Seek out smiles and laughter!

## Sunday November 8th, 2020

**Scripture**— Matthew 25:1-13

**Story**— When I was in seminary, I volunteered at a local church with their confirmation group. It was a BIG Lutheran church, with 60 kids in confirmation. It was...an experience.

I was never a youth group kid. I had already lost my faith and I found much of the activities to be, well, super cheesy and lame.

So here I was, learning how to be a pastor, and leading a small group in super cheesy and lame activities. One particular was regarding today's Gospel reading. We were assigned this text as a group and were told to come up with a skit in 30 minutes. I hated it. My kids hated it.

But in the midst of our holier-than-thou attitude towards skits, we put together a short story about being ready. For the kids at the time, it was standing outside a Justin Bieber concert. The prepared bridesmaids fully charged their phones beforehand. Low and behold, our Justin Bieber walks out (and they had to torture me by making me play Bieber), and the prepared bridesmaids had plenty of battery to take photos with the celebrity and during the concert itself, while the others had no battery left.

It was dumb and poorly planned out, and I did hate every minute of it. But I will admit, it did lead us into a conversation about how we prepare for God's kin-dom, with an emphasis on self-care.

I always sort of hated this parable before, because it doesn't seem very generous or grace-filled, but I hear it again as a very good reminder that if we give too much of ourselves, then we won't be able to participate too. For some of us that's rest, for others it's grace and generosity. But this reminds us that we too need oil to keep our lamps lit.

**Prayer**— Lord, help us to share your light with others, to be ready for you, and continue to pour your oil of grace in our lamps. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

**Connect**—How can you fill your lamp today?

## Thursday November 19th, 2020

**Scripture**— Psalm 23

**Story**—There's a theme this week around shepherds, sheep and goats, this famous psalm is one we can turn to in so much of our lives, as we remember what the Lord as our shepherd means to us.

**Prayer**—Lord you are our shepherd, you lay us beside green pastures, you fill our cups, be with us through shadows and fear, and bring us into your light. Amen.

**Connect**—We hear this psalm a lot, but we don't always spend time with it. Read through this psalm several times and see if something new is standing out to you today.

## Friday November 20th, 2020

**Scripture**—Choose your own!

**Story**—Sometimes it's nice to go back into our favorite scripture texts. My top three (tied for first place) are Revelation 3 with the image of Jesus knocking on our door ready to be with us at the table; Luke 1:46-55 with Mary's Song of Praise; and Psalm 139, a reminder that God made us and knows exactly who we are and loves us.

**Prayer**—Lord your Word guides us, inspires us, comforts us, calls us, and fills us with the Holy Spirit. Be with us in our reading today, in our praying today, and open our eyes to your Word anew. Amen.

**Connect**—Take some time today to look at your favorite scriptures and stories and delve into them a little deeper today.

## Saturday November 21st, 2020

**Scripture**— Psalm 100

**Story**—Tomorrow is Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday, the last day of our church year and a day of celebration for the Kin-dom Jesus brings is unlike any of this world (thank God!)

**Prayer**—God you make us and all things, guide us today and this weekend with joy and thanksgiving for all you give. Through Christ our leader and our hope, we pray, amen.

**Connect**—Reach out and share joy today!

## Monday November 16th, 2020

**Scripture**—Psalm 95:1-7a

**Story**—My favorite song to sing to God is “Will You Come and Follow Me” (ELW #798). My favorite line as I imagine God singing with me is in verse 4: “Will you love the you you hide if I but call your name?” When we sing our praises to God, God is with us, singing with us, for the Lord is our God.

**Prayer**—Lord you are a great God, help us to find ways to sing your praises today and throughout this week. Amen.

**Connect**— What’s your favorite song singing God’s praises? Take some time today to write out the lyrics, read over them, sing them if you like. Make some time for song in your day today.

## Tuesday November 17th, 2020

**Scripture**— Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

**Story**—What about this reading today stands out to you?

**Prayer**—Lord you are our Shepherd, you seek us, you care for us, we give you thanks and pray that we may be your servants as well as those you shepherd. Amen.

**Connect**—Take some time to journal, to read through Ezekiel and make notes, listening for where God may be leading you with these words today.

## Wednesday November 18th, 2020

**Scripture**— Ephesians 1:15-23

**Story**—What thanksgiving might we give for our church family and friends today? As the letter to the Ephesians shares, how might we pray for one another too?

**Prayer**—God we pray for our church, for our community, give us wisdom, open our hearts, continue to guide us and strengthen us in all things today. Through your power in Christ we pray, amen.

**Connect**—Reach out to someone in our church family today and ask how you might pray for them. It can be awkward, but can be so wonderful to pray for one another. If they ask, open up and share what prayers you might be needing today too.

## Monday November 9th, 2020

**Scripture**—Psalm 90:1-12

**Story**—Remember a few years ago when “YOLO” (You Only Live Once) was super popular with all the youths? I was just old enough to see the phrase as short-sighted and often used in activities that were dangerous and to put it lightly—dumb.

Our Psalm this week though, talks about numbering our days, about the seasons of life changing, about how our emotions change through awe, anger, and heartfelt wisdom. I don’t think this is a “YOLO” Psalm, but I do think that the Psalm reminds us that each day in each of our lives matters, each day is important, and each day God is guiding our hearts to wisdom.

**Prayer**— Lord you are our refuge, our strength, our hope and our life. Each day is a gift from you. Guide us to share the gifts of your wisdom, to open our hearts, and to continue to appreciate and give thanks for all that you provide. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**Connect**—Spend some time reaching out to your church family today. Maybe someone you haven’t talked to in months. Maybe someone you keep forgetting to call. Take some time right now and reach out, celebrating each day we have and using this gift of time to spend it connecting with others.

## Tuesday, November 10th, 2020

**Scripture**— Nehemiah 8:8-12

**Story**—What are ways you celebrate the Lord? How do you find yourself rejoicing these days? How might we celebrate together when we can’t be in person together?

**Prayer**— God, help us to make time for joy in midst of our grief, to find laughter in our tears, and to connect with one another in you, amen.

**Connect**—Connect with God today, celebrate and give thanks for God’s gifts in your life, maybe even eat something really yummy or for dinner today!

## Wednesday November 11th, 2020

**Scripture**— 1 Corinthians 16:13

**Story**— My dad struggled with years figuring out if he deserved to be identified as a veteran and celebrated on this date. He came home alive from the Gulf War in the 90's, he wanted to give thanks for the strong who lost their lives, he wanted to celebrate the heroes from wars long before.

It took him a long time before he finally took on the title he deserved.

I always wondered about that, I wonder if words like these from 1 Corinthians made him feel like he didn't fit into his own picture of a veteran. Maybe he didn't feel on guard, courageous, or strong in his faith or in his military career.

I suppose I'll never know.

For our prayer for today, I share the litany written by the ELCA's Worship Team.

**Prayer**—On this day, we remember those who have served in our armed forces Pause for silent reflection Prince of Peace, even as we pray for an end to war, We give thanks for our soldiers' courage, for their love of country, and for their work to bring peace to our world. Healer of All, bind up the wounds of all who have served Show us how to comfort those who are hurting. Merciful God, all suffer the cost of war. We remember widows and widowers, orphans, and all those separated from those they love. We pray, Gracious God, that swords will be turned into plowshares and that peace will reign. We give thanks for all who have served. Shield from danger those who bravely protect us. With them, may we glory not in war, but in your love and righteousness. Strengthen us to be your peacemakers in the world. Amen.

**Connect**—Reach out to a veteran in your life today. Take time to remember those who have said goodbye and find ways to honor their memory today.

## Sunday November 15th, 2020

**Scripture**—Matthew 25:14-30

**Story**—I want to bury this parable because I find it very difficult to imagine Jesus or God as the master in this story. And on first reading, I struggled to see how any of this was good news to anyone. It's angry and judgmental, and exclusive language like this that pushed me away from the church for a third of my life.

I keep reminding myself that this is a parable – it isn't meant to make total sense, and even for Jesus's time, there are continuity errors with the ways in which slave owners and slaves interacted. We won't get into all of them here.

But it's a reminder for me, that this parable is meant to get us thinking, it's meant to push our buttons, to frustrate us, to make us want to bury it.

But the truth is, and what we're seeing more and more in our world—we can't bury the things that make us uncomfortable. We have to look at them, really see the truths of others' experiences, and work to support and make real change in our community, country, and world. What might have been different in our world if when someone shared the pain and the hurt they had experienced, and instead of it being buried, we listened, in our discomfort we struggled, but it was no longer buried away?

Maybe the talent we are given by our Lord and master is the need to act justly. To listen to these stories and believe, to work towards justice.

**Prayer**—God, you give us parables to make us uncomfortable, to get us listening and wondering. You give us talents and callings that you hope we will invest into your creation. Help us to listen, to support, and to participate in your world, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Connect**—It's Sunday! Make some time to reach out to your church family! Whether it be by phone, by card, or by safely distanced visits, help us to connect us today!

## Friday November 13th, 2020

**Scripture**—Judges 4:1-7

**Story**—I love Deborah. She's a prophetess, a judge, and a commander of armies. She is the opposite of what we often think of when we hear the term "biblical woman", but here she is, giving commands and being listened to.

During the summer as part of our Small Seeds Zoom time, we talked about girls in the bible. Our kids could name Mary, mother of God, but no one else. It saddened me since a third of our group are girls. They didn't know of any of the other women in scripture that they could look to for inspiration. So we spent time talking about some of the women in scripture, Focusing on Mary Magdalene who first preached the Good News of Jesus's resurrection, along with a bit of Deborah. To see in their eyes that there was a woman in the bible who was looked to for judgements, who commanded armies, that there were women who preached and led even when they weren't listened too. It was so inspiring to me to get to be part of these discoveries.

**Prayer**— Mothering God, help us to see inspirational figures like us and unlike us throughout your Word, guide us to seek your wisdom and judgement in our lives. Amen.

**Connect**—Connect to those in your life who have inspired you today. If they have passed, spend some time remembering them, and allowing them to continue to give you inspiration.

## Saturday November 14th, 2020

**Scripture**— Psalm 123

**Story**— Let's spend some time praying this psalm today.

**Prayer**— To You, God, we lift our eyes, with all that surrounds us we pray again and again for your mercy and grace. Amen.

**Connect**—Connect with God today, lifting up your own prayers and petitions, your own hopes for God's mercy in our world.

## Thursday November 12th, 2020

**Scripture**—1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**Story**—Oof! 1 & 2 Thessalonians are often difficult texts to read, particularly because the church in Thessalonica was dealing with so much violence, persecution, fear, and brokenness around them. Maybe we can relate a little bit today in 2020, but even with all that we've experienced these last months, even with a pandemic, a cry for racial justice, chaotic elections, and constant division—imagine this for Thessalonica, but worse.

Sometimes, when we go through our absolute worst nightmares, good news sounds dichotomies, like two sides with a promise that we're on the good side.

But instead of giving in to more divisiveness with this reading, more exclusion, more heartache for those who may not be "in" by whatever standards we create....What if instead we use this as a reminder that even when our world seems to be filled with shadows, even when we are tired from working for God's Kingdom come, even when we need to rest—God will still be there for us too, will still bring us the day, bring us light, and bring us hope. And in that light and hope, on those days, we can share encouragement and hope together.

**Prayer**—Lord, help to shine your light in our lives. Guide us to share that light and hope, even in the worst of times. Strengthen us in your love and in caring for others, amen.

**Connect**—Build one another up today. Who might you reach out to today that you can give encouragement and hope to today? Give them a call, send a card, take some time to be built up as well by those you reach out to.